

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Geocaching	Effective Date
Signature	Review Date

Policy

Geocaching in state parks and fishing access sites (FAS) will be allowed and managed under a system of formal permitting and review.

Procedures and StandardsPermit Requirements

1. Placement of any geocache or letterbox on lands administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks requires a geocache permit approved by the park manager or designee.
2. The person wishing to place a geocache must provide current contact information, including his or her name, address, telephone number, and email address.
3. A geocache permit may be approved for no more than two years.
4. A geocache may remain at the approved site for no more than two permit cycles (a maximum of four years), at which time the cache must be removed, the site restored to its original condition, and the park manager informed in writing of the removal. This will control cache abandonment and assist in preventing trail development to the site.

Cache Contents

1. Caches that contain any alcohol, weapons, drugs, drug paraphernalia, money, or socially unacceptable items will be removed and the permit(s) may be voided at the manager's discretion.
2. Caches involving commercial activities (e.g., associated with product promotion) or special events are subject to additional review and permitting requirements, and may require a fee.

Cache Placement

1. There should be no earth disturbance or vegetative impact to any approved site. Nor should the cache be readily discernable by the general public.
2. A cache may not be placed within park buildings, on stream banks, wetlands, on prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, cemeteries, ecologically sensitive areas, unique geological features, cliff faces, dam structures, mine shafts, or other unsafe areas. Interested parties must

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- contact the Park Manager or designee for possible additional restrictions or questions concerning the proposed location.
3. Park managers are responsible for monitoring geocache locations and contents, resource impacts, and use levels.
 4. Park managers may limit the number of geocaches in a state park or FAS based on acreage, frequency of use, availability of staff to permit, or perceptions of crowding.

Cache Identification and Maintenance

1. The cache name must be clearly visible on the exterior of all geocache containers.
2. An "Official Geocache" sticker (available at the park or regional office) will be placed on the container. The cache name must be the same on the "Official Geocache" sticker, Identification Form, and any web site postings.
3. The geocacher is responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the cache.
4. Unauthorized caches on state park or FAS lands will be removed and treated as abandoned property. The responsible person may be cited under administrative rule 12.8.207(4) or other rules.
5. The cacher shall delete site location(s) from all publications and/or website(s) within seven days of removal.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for managers and the public to manage geocaching and letterboxing in a manner that is equitable and consistent with other management objectives and demands. Geocaching is consistent with the mission and vision of the state park system when properly conducted to avoid use conflicts, minimize resource impacts, maintain public safety, and enhance public enjoyment.

Authority/Reference

23-1-101, MCA, Purpose of the state park system,
23-1-106, MCA, Rules, penalties, enforcement
87-1-301, MCA, Powers of Commission
12.8.207(4), ARM, Property disturbance.

Definitions

State Park - any area managed by FWP for outdoor recreation, historic or cultural preservation, or public education, and which is listed in FWP's *Montana State Park Brochure*.

Cache - A hidden container filled with a logbook, pen/pencil, stamp, and possibly trinkets.

CITO - stands for Cache In, Trash Out. Geocachers are encouraged to practice this when engaged in geocaching and to remove all trash that they find in the area or on their walk to a cache site. CITO also refers to an event organized by cachers to perform volunteer litter pick-up in parks, along roads, or in neighborhoods as part of community involvement.

Datum - a point or line used as a basis for calculating and measuring.

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Fishing Access Site – any area managed by the department primarily for angling, but also for other recreational uses and as listed in the FAS brochure.

Geocaching - A game for Global Positioning Systems (GPS) users. The basic idea is that individuals or organizations place caches and share the coordinates of these caches on the Internet. GPS users then locate the coordinates to find the caches. Once found, the user records his or her find on a web site log, such as at www.Geocaching.com.

Letterboxing – a treasure hunt using clues and sometimes map coordinates or compass bearings. The basic idea is that someone hides a cache, writes clues to the location, and enters the clues on a letterboxing web site. Using these clues, other people then attempt to locate the cache. Finders log the find in the cache's logbook and their personal logbook.

Multi-cache - Multiple cache containers are located from information received from the previous container.

Mystery Cache - Intended to be more challenging; may involve use of clues, hints, or puzzles to confuse or mislead the seeker. May involve multiple stages.

Offset cache - Coordinates lead the seeker to a location to find a number stamped/written in or on an item at the location. Or, once at the location, the user will continue the search according to instructions on the initial information received from the geocache web site.

Virtual cache – For a virtual cache, no cache container is used. The location itself is the cache. Nothing is traded, except perhaps photos and experiences.